

Exodus 17 - Thursday, November 13th, 2008

- In chapter 16, we left the Israelites in the "Wilderness of Sin," where God had provided daily Manna in the morning for them to gather.
- In chapter 17, we'll see how God provides water out of a rock for the Israelites, and provides victory in a battle against the Amalekites.

17:1 Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.

- Notice that it was according to the commandment of the Lord that they set out from the "Wilderness of Sin," and camped in Rephidim.
- What's interesting about this is that they are obeying God's command, yet upon arriving there, they find that there's no water to drink.

2 Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?"

- Here we go again; the Israelites are once again complaining against and contending with Moses over not having any water to drink.
- While it may be normal to be concerned about not having drinking water, their response is not normal given how God has provided.
- Suffice it to say that it's very grievous to the Lord that it is akin to one being testing of the Lord when so distrusting in the Lord.

- It's also important to note how that the Israelites are reacting to Moses by blaming him for being the reason they have this problem.
- Believing that it's Moses' fault isn't the answer, however; Moses will wisely turn to the Lord for the answer instead of defending himself.

"Complaining of second causes is really complaining of the Lord, let us disguise it as we may. What, after all had Moses to do with it? The root of this sin of murmuring was unbelief. Could they not trust Jehovah? Would He not be sure to supply their wants? Had He ever been unmindful of them? Alas, notwithstanding all our experience of His faithfulness we ourselves are not clear from unbelief. He that is without fault among us, let him throw the first stone at Israel."

Charles Spurgeon

3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

- This is obviously a very intense and heated confrontation as evidenced by the Israelites wanting to actually kill Moses by stoning him.
- Notice that this is now the third time they have accused Moses of bringing them out of Egypt for the sole purpose of killing them.
- Incredibly, in the face of such ridiculous attack and false accusations, Moses responds instead of reacts, and cries out to the Lord.

5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

- Notice that the Lord tells Moses that in spite of all the unfair attacks against him, He is to still lead them and "go on before the people."
- It's interesting to note that the Lord would have Moses take some of the elders of Israel with him to Horeb where he will strike the rock.
- Perhaps the Lord wants to reaffirm His choice of Moses as their leader by having the elders once again witness this miracle from God.
- It's also worthy of noting that the Lord has Moses take the same rod that he has used to perform all the prior miracles up to this point.
- One thought is that God wants to reinforce confidence in Moses by using that which he had already experienced success with before.
- For God to tell Moses that He would stand before him on the rock in Horeb surely provided Moses with much needed encouragement.
- It must have astonished Moses when God tells him; "you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink."
- Naturally, this wouldn't have made any sense at all, yet Moses knows God has demonstrated what He's capable of doing with water.
- It's because of this total faith and trust in the Lord, that Moses doesn't question or argue with the Lord, and will simply obey the Lord.
- Can you imagine how foolish Moses would've felt if he'd taken the elders of Israel to Horeb struck the rock and have nothing happen?
- I submit to you that Moses doesn't care what they think; He only cares about what God said. That was supreme and all that mattered.

7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

- The name is the nature, so Moses named this place according to the contentious nature of the Israelites and how they tested the Lord.
- It's interesting that Rephidim means refreshing, but Massah means testing, and Meribah means striving, contention, and even rebellion.
- Perhaps this was God's way of establishing a reminder to them as to how they sinned against the Lord so as to sort of rebuke them.
- God remembers and reminds them of this in Deuteronomy 6:16, You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah
- Then again in Deuteronomy 9:22 at . . . Massah . . . you provoked the Lord to wrath
- Then again in Deuteronomy 33:8 Your holy one, Whom You tested at Massah, and with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah
- This begs of the question of why God would make it clear that He remembered how Israel tested Him by being contentious with Him.
- One thought is that it was because the Israelites questioned the Lord by saying; "Is the Lord among us or not?" This angered the Lord!
- Hadn't He been with them in Egypt, then at the Red Sea in the cloud by day and fire by night? How could they doubt His presence?

"The Lord takes note of His people's chidings and commemorates them. We must not think a grumbling spirit to be a small evil. The Lord has here set a mark and a brand upon it."

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8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.9 And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand."10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

- Interestingly, we round a quick corner here in verse eight and find this unprovoked attack by Amalek against the children of Israel.

"These ferocious wanderers attacked Israel unawares in a cowardly and unprovoked manner, when they were least able to defend themselves. They seem to have been of all Israel's foes the most wantonly malicious, and hence they are instructive emblems of sin and Satan."

Charles Spurgeon

- Also, this is the first time we are introduced to Joshua, who served Moses, doing all he said, then, he subsequently succeeds Moses.

- We're also introduced to a man named "Hur." Now, "Hur" is a "him," and not a "her," though the name that is given to "him" is, "Hur."

11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

- Notice that when Moses was unable to keep his hands lifted up Amalek prevailed, but when his hands were lifted up, Israel prevailed.

- When his hands became too heavy, Moses sits on a rock, and both Aaron and Hur supported his hands until they defeated Amalek.

- The Amalekites were despicable in how they would mercilessly attack and kill all the elderly, lame and crippled who lagged behind.

Deuteronomy 25:17-19 17 Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. 18 When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. 19 When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget! NIV

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."15 And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; 16 for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

- God is so adamant about wiping out the Amalekites because unless the Israelites conquered them they would battle them all their life.

- Moses builds an altar and calls it, Jehovah Nissi, which means "The Lord is My Banner." He knows the Lord won this battle for them.

- It's interesting that Israel, under King Saul, would disobey God's command to wipe out the Amalekites, and it would cost Saul his life.

- Before we look at some lessons to learn, there's something very profound here in this chapter, and we'd be grossly remiss to miss it.

- Once again we have a scripture picture that in typology points to the person of Jesus Christ and the finished work on the Calvary cross.

THE ROD	THE SERPENT
THE ROCK	JESUS
THE WATER	THE HOLY SPIRIT
ISRAEL	BELIEVERS
AMALEK	THE FLESH
THE SWORD	THE WORD
LIFTING UP HANDS	PRAYER

- It's interesting that later, Israel would remember God's provision in the wilderness at the Feast of Tabernacles with a specific ceremony.

- The following generations would recall this miracle of water from a rock, yet not realize that Jesus was the Rock of their salvation.

John 7:37-38 37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within ..

Lessons I can learn from Exodus chapter 17:

1. Like with the Israelites finding no water in Rephidim though they obeyed God's command, so too can we find it difficult in God's will.
2. Like with the Israelites once again contending with Moses, so too do we test the Lord when we distrust Him after all He's provided us.
3. Like with the Israelites blaming Moses for their problems, so too are we prone to blame our leaders for problems that we encounter.
4. Like with Moses not defending himself when blamed by Israel, so too should we turn to the Lord instead of trying to argue with people.
5. Like with Moses not reacting, but responding when falsely accused, so too would we do well to cry out to the Lord about what to do.
6. Like with Moses leading Israel in the face of unfair attacks, so too does a good and godly leader still lead, even when unfairly attacked.
7. Like with Moses taking the elders to Horeb with him, so too may the Lord reaffirm His choice of us by what He does in and through us.
8. Like with the Lord having Moses use the same rod at Horeb, so too may He reinforce confidence in us by using what worked before.
9. Like with the Lord telling Moses that He would stand before Him, so too will the Lord provide us with much needed encouragement.
10. Like with Moses not doubting God about striking the rock, so too, He requires our obedience, especially when it doesn't make sense.
11. Like with Moses not caring about what the elders thought, so too should we only care about what God said and not what others think.
12. Like with God remembering how Israel contended with Him, so too does God take it seriously when we doubt His presence with us.
13. Like with Aaron and Hur lifting Moses' hands to defeat Amalek, so too will we defeat the enemy when our hands are lifted in prayer.
 - One has noted that when Jesus defeated the ultimate enemy, Satan himself, he did so with his hands lifted up and stretched out.
 - One commentator suggests that Moses with his wooden rod on this hill with two on each side pictures Christ on a wooden cross.
14. Like with the Amalekites always attacking the weak from behind, so too does Satan attack us from behind when we our flesh is weak.
15. Like with God commanding Israel to destroy the Amalekites, so too it could cost us our lives if we don't destroy the deeds of the flesh.